

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTIAGO 02361 021822Z

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8421

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 2361

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINS, PINR

SUBJ: ORLANDO LETELIER FAMILY

REF: (A) SANTIAGO 2313; (B) SANTIAGO 1693

1. SUMMARY. ISABEL LETELIER AND HER FOUR SONS ARE WELL BUT HARASSED BY ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, SURVEILLANCE OF GOC INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES, AND UNCERTAINTY OVER ULTIMATE FATE OF ORLANDO LETELIER, ALLENDE'S LAST FOREIGN MINISTER AND FORMER AMBASSADOR TO US, STILL BEING HELD BY GOC WITHOUT CHARGE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN PRIVATE DINNER WITH EMBOFF FAMILY EVENING APRIL 29, MRS. ISABEL MOREL DE LETELIER AND FOUR TEENAGE SONS (ONE A US CITIZEN) DISCUSSED CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THEY HAVE LIVED SINCE ORLANDO LETELIER WAS ARRESTED SEPT 11, 1973 AND IMPRISONED ON DAWSON ISLAND. DURING THIS PERIOD MRS. LETELIER HAS SEEN HUSBAND ONLY ONCE, FOR 15 MINUTES JAN 17 IN HOSPITAL AT PUNTA ARENAS, WHERE HE HAD BEEN TAKEN FOR DENTAL TREATMENT. TO BEST OF HER KNOWLEDGE HE HAS NOT RPT NOT OTHERWISE LEFT DAWSON. SHE HAS SEEN RECENT NEWSPAPER STORIES OF PENDING TRANSFER OF HUSBAND TO SANTIAGO AREA (REFTEL A) BUT HAS NO RPT NO OTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING HIS WHEREABOUTS.

3. LETELIERS HAVE BEEN PERMITTED BY GOC TO EXCHANGE LETTERS ON SUPPOSED SCHEDULE, BUT CAPRICIOUS CENSORSHIP AND NON-DELIVERY OF LETTERS HAVE REDUCED EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TO
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PAGE 02 SANTIAGO 02361 021822Z

ABOUT ONCE PER MONTH. SHE STATES THAT IN AT LEAST ONE INSTANCE

CENSOR INSERTED "DO NOT" IN ONE OF HER LETTERS WHICH ENDED "I LOVE YOU." NO MENTION OF POLITICAL MATTERS, POSSIBLE CHARGES AGAINST LETELIER, OR EVEN HIRING OF LAWYER HAS BEEN PERMITTED. HOWEVER, FRIENDS IN POSITION TO KNOW HAVE KEPT FAMILY INFORMED OF LETELIER'S WELFARE ON DAWSON, AND RED CROSS, NEWSMAN, AND VISITORS TO CHILE SUCH AS IDB OFFICIALS HAVE PASSED INFORMATION TO THEM.

4. APPARENTLY LETELIER HAS SUFFERED NO TORTURE OR OTHER PHYSICAL MISTREATMENT, BUT INITIAL LACK OF MEDICAL TREATMENT AND INADEQUATE DIET SEVERELY AFFECTED HIM AND PRESUMABLY OTHER PRISONERS. LETLIER HAD DENTAL SURGERY SEPT 10 AND WAS SENT TO DAWSON WITH OPEN ROOT CANAL WHICH CAUSED SEVERE PAIN FOR MONTHS. WHEN MRS. LETELIER HEARD OF THIS THROUGH HER OWN "CLANDESTINE" CHANNELS IN JANUARY, SHE WENT TO GOC DETAINEES OFFICE (SANTIAGO 270) AND OFFERED TO PAY ALL EXPENSES TO HAVE HUSBAND TREATED. LETELIER TAKEN SHORTLY AFTER TO PUNTA ARENAS FOR TREATMENT, AT GOC EXPENSE.

5. DURING PERIOD OCTOBER-NOVEMBER PRISONERS ON DAWSON APPARENTLY LIVED ON LITTLE MORE THAN LENTILS AND BREAD. LETELIER LOST MANY KILOS OF WEIGHT, BUT FORTUNATELY, ACCORDING WIFE, HE WAS CONSIDERABLY OVERWEIGHT WHEN ARRESTED. SINCE DECEMBER HE AND PRESUMABLY OTHERS HAVE RECOVERED WEIGHT WITH IMPROVED IF SPARTAN DIET. WARM CLOTHING AND SOME FOOD SENT BY FAMILY WAS RECEIVED, AND RED CROSS ALSO PROVIDED SOME ITEMS.

6. MRS. LETELIER UNDERSTANDS THAT CARDINAL SILVA ASKED JUNTA FOR PERMISSION TO, AND DID, SEND PRIEST TO DAWSON TO CARE FOR PRISONERS IN OCTOBER. JUNTA ALLOWED NAVY CHAPLAIN TO GO, BUT TRANSFERRED HIM ABOUT END NOVEMBER.

7. SHORTLY AFTER COUP, MRS. LETELIER ENGAGED LAWYER NURIELDIN HERMOSILLA BOTH TO HELP HER WITH OWN PROBLEMS AND TO DEFEND LETELIER IF NECESSARY. NO RPT NO CHARGES OF ANY DESCRIPTION HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO DATE TO HER OR TO LAWYER. SHE HAS BEEN TOLD BY HIGH GOC SOURCE THAT LETELIER LETTER TO ALLENDE RE GUN SHIPMENT WHICH APPEARED IN PRESS APRIL 1 (REFTEL B) WAS GIVEN TO PAPER BY MINISTRY INTERIOR SOURCES WITHOUT APPROVAL OF JUNTA, WHICH REGARDED MATTER AS RIDICULOUS. NOTHING MORE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SANTIA 02361 021822Z

HAS BEEN HEARD OF LETTER. SHE ACCEPTS LETTER AS PROBABLY GENUINE, GIVEN STYLE AND LETELIER'S RELATION WITH ALLENDE. INTERESTING POINT MADE THAT NUMEROUS "CONSERVATIVE" LAWYERS WHO FOUGHT ALLENDE GOVT QUICKLY RALLIED TO DEFENSE OF ITS MEMBERS WHEN JUNTA ARRESTED THEM.

8. MRS. LETELIER HOPES THAT IF ANY CHARGES ARE PLACED, THEY WILL BE FORMALITY AND LETELIER WILL BE EITHER ABSOLVED OR

RELEASED ON BASIS TIME SERVED ON DAWSON AND PERMITTED TO LEAVE CHILE. HE HAS SEVERAL OFFERS OF TEACHING POSITIONS IN US AND WOULD MOST PROBABLY ACCEPT SUNY OFFER AT BUFFALO, PARTLY BECAUSE OF RELATIVE ISOLATION OF THAT CAMPUS AND THUS INSULATION FROM ATTEMPTS TO DRAW HIM INTO POLITICS AGAIN. HE WOULD WANT TO BE ABLE TO VISIT CHILE FROM TIME TO TIME TO SEE PARENTS AND THUS WOULD PROBABLY AVOID BECOMING INVOLVED IN ANTI-JUNTA ACTIVITIES. SHE ASKED IF SHE OR FAMILY WOULD HAVE VISA PROBLEMS WITH USG, AND WAS TOLD THAT WE KNOW OF NO RPT NO PRESENT BAR TO ENTRY.

9. MRS. LETELIER HERSELF, AND HER SONS, APPEAR WELL, BUT STRAIN HAS TAKEN SOME TOLL. FAMILY LIVES IN APARTMENT NEAR US CONSULATE NEAR DOWNTOWN SANTIAGO. FOR SOME TIME AFTER COUP SHE WAS ADVISED BY AUTHORITIES TO STAY AT HOME, BUT FOR LA
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